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THE ANTI-UNION.

PRICE 2D.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1799.

No. XXII.

TO THE IRISH NATION.

— rapere falsis nominibus imperium.
Tacitus in vita Agricola.

COUNTRYMEN,

THE fever of expectation has at length subsided—The agitations of fear and hope are at an end—but if I mistake not the feelings which have succeeded those agitations are not less fatal to your quiet. The developement of that plot which has been formed against your liberty has shewn you, indeed, the extent of your danger; but accompanied, as that developement was, with proofs that the danger is yet imminent, you must now more than ever be occupied with the momentous and anxious question how it shall be averted? Momentous indeed it is! far too great for one mind to discuss or decide on. But though it be not for the individual to dictate on a question which seems to belong exclusively to the nation, or rather to that constitutional organ of the nation's will, which has, on this occasion, so loudly and faithfully spoken the sense of Ireland; yet in this free state, every man not only has a right, at such a time as this, but is bound to communicate to his countrymen the impressions which he feels. I avail myself of this privilege, then, while yet I may, to ease the throbbings of an heart bursting with the indignant feelings of an Irishman, who sees his country and all the blessings it contains, his friends, his family, his offspring, exposed in prostrate weakness to the uplifted dagger of an avowed and persevering enemy who hears eternal war declared against the constitution which he has bled to defend, and which justifies him in the proud boast of being the free subject of a free state!

Is this the situation of Ireland at this hour? I refer those who doubt, to the insolent and hypocritical preamble with which the British minister has prefaced the deed of sale which, if we resist not, is to transfer for ever the kingdom of Ireland and its people into the power of the British parliament. I know not what impression that speech may have made on others, but to me it appears a piece of base and black sophistry, comprehending at once a premeditated insult on the people of this country, and a denunciation of eternal hostility against its constitution. How does it insult us? I answer, in every way in which a country can be insulted: It calumniates our morals—it derides our intellect—it laughs at our weakness—it mocks our poverty—and it charges the legislature which governs us, not with venial errors, but with a radical incapacity, from its ignorance and its corruption, to discharge its functions. Every argument by which

it attempts to recommend an Union is founded on the ignorance, the barbarism, the vices, of the people of Ireland, their pretended dependance on British generosity for existence as a nation, and on their alledged incapacity to subsist without British protection. And why is it that we do not accede to the force of these arguments? We are told it is because, barbarous and uncivilized as we are, we reject from PREJUDICE a proffered boon! Is it then prejudice to reject a proposal which extinguishes for ever the sovereignty of our country? Is it prejudice to love independence, to uphold a constitution which we obtained with difficulty and have defended with our blood? Is it prejudice in Ireland to spurn the yoke and to refuse unconditional submission to the legislature of a country, which, when we were subject to them, treated us with cruelty, with injustice, which even now the friends of that country, the advocates of the proposed measure can neither deny, nor justify, nor extenuate, nay, which they do not wish to extenuate, but actually boast of as the only bond which kept the countries together? But the days of darkness, it is said, are past, and the enlightened policy of Great Britain now perceives that the interests of the two countries are one, and that the prosperity of Ireland must encrease the wealth of Britain. How does this appear? Is it proved by the present conduct of Great Britain, or by the avowed principles of her policy in this very instance? No, certainly. On the contrary, she explicitly declares that while Ireland retains her separate independence, the prosperity of *this* country, is a just cause of fear and jealousy in *that*. For, is not this the principle upon which this project of an Union rests—that in order to make the interests of Ireland compatible with those of Britain, Ireland must forego all distinct existence, and submit herself and her concerns to the direction of the British legislature? And why is this necessary but because, even yet, with all her pretences to liberality, Great Britain sees in Ireland a rival, whose existence is inconsistent with *her* ease and safety? Thus the very proposal of an Union proves the continued existence of former prejudices, and involves a declaration of the old principle of hostility under a new name—The *delenda est Carthago* is translated by it into plain English, and becomes “Ireland must unite with Britain or be put down!”

But would even an Union save Ireland from the operation of this destructive principle? To answer this, let us consider what are the evils which the minister resorts to an Union to correct. The principal of these is “the division of sects in the remnant of ancient hostility between the old inhabitants and the settlers.” Now, I ask how can an Union terminate those divisions unless

by the equal compressure of slavery upon all parties, that pressure which reduces what is high to the lowest level, and sinks what is now lowest lower, which is in fact the principle of hostility to Ireland carried to its extreme. I know but one way in which British power can obviate the hostility between the "old inhabitants and settlers," if that distinction yet exists after they have been incorporated for so many centuries: I see but one way I say in which British power can appease Irish jealousies, namely, *that* in which a paramount state generally tranquillizes a subject one, putting down one party by another, and then extinguishing that which survives. Barbarous and incorrigible as the British minister thinks us, what more gentle treatment could we expect than others in the same circumstances have experienced? But who are these settlers?—have they not been Englishmen, overflowing with that valour, virtue, and civilization, which we are told will rush in upon us after an Union and regenerate our country? Now, if these same English settlers have hitherto produced so little effect in reclaiming our "old inhabitants" from their inveterate barbarism, what hope can be entertained that the new comers will be more successful? Alas! it is but too true, I fear, that there is not now a greater stock of this valour and virtue in England than there was two or three centuries back;—a new importation, therefore, if our ports were open for it, would not I apprehend be much more copious or effective than former ones. How then would the tranquillising and civilising speculation proceed? I will not shock the feelings or alarm the fears of the old Milesian, by pointing out to him what *other* modes might be put in practice to reform him, besides the example of British virtue, but lest at a future day his patience and fortitude should be put to the trial, I will suggest to him (if he be civilized enough to know that partial evil must be suffered for the general good) that † "many lamentable but necessary inflictions" will perhaps then have become indispensable for the general security of the British empire—for the removal "of that ignorance and want of civilization which exist in Ireland in a greater degree than in any other country"—for the extinction of "religious and national feuds and animosities," and to make way for the "infusion of British valour and British virtue" into his native country! But let not the old Irish be alarmed, their barbarism will not be so obstinate as to force the civilizing power of Britain to such extreme expedients. The importation of British valour and virtue will be attended with the "introduction of a more cultivated intellect!"—The blindness of Ireland which is at present such as a British minister "could have no conception of" will be removed—The hebetude of Irish faculties will be sharpened—And the most barbarous country in the world will catch by sympathy the morals, the

the manners, and the industry, of the civilizing state! It was impudent of France to talk of giving liberty to Europe; but let the world judge whether the insolence of the British minister does not outstrip France when he talks of giving, not liberty, but intellect to a country.

But we *are to have* the British constitution! I call on every man who wishes well to the connection between the two countries to say who it is that now endangers that connection—Mr. Pitt, who tells Ireland that she is not free, because her crown is on the head of a British King; or those who oppose an Union, because Ireland already possesses the constitution of England? But granting for a moment that we have it not, and that we enjoy but a mockery of freedom; is it from Mr. Pitt—is it, I ask, from Britain herself that we are to beg or buy a constitution? Is liberty exclusively the growth of British soil? Does it participate of qualities which, like those of noxious animals, cannot exist in an atmosphere purely Irish, and must we incorporate with England before it will live in our island? No! countrymen; believe me, liberty and a free constitution may be obtained by any country whose inhabitants are MEN; and the security and continuance of that liberty depends *only* upon their own virtue. If you cannot be free without the patronage and protection of Britain, you cannot be free with it:—Your liberty and your constitution must be self-existent, or they are nothing. You may as well talk of creating shadow, without light or substance, as of giving liberty to those who want strength or virtue to acquire it. The liberty of a state is like the strength of an individual, both must flow from an inherent principle—both are incommunicable.

But how are the Catholics to be affected by an Union? The majority of the "old inhabitants" of Ireland are Catholics, and they have been the merchandise of party for a century back. Let it not be supposed that I mean to bribe the Catholic to defend the constitution of his country against the aggression of an insolent assailant; the services which are bought in such a case are worthless, for they are insincere and capricious: I call on him but to open his eyes—to view his present situation, and to weigh well the offers which are made to tempt him to betray his trust to his country and his posterity. What does Mr. Pitt offer to bribe the Catholic? His offer, if it can be called one, is comprehended in this memorable sentence:—"If *ever the day comes* that the Catholics shall give proof of their principles, that it is *safe* to admit them to every privilege, such a measure, in an united parliament, would be free from all those dangers which would threaten Ireland if it were considered as a separate and distinct legislature." Now I say that this sentence, framed as it is in the evasive and cunning spirit which marks the composition of this dealer in words, is yet sufficiently explicit to prove to any man of common understanding that the Catholic has *NOTHING* to expect from an Union; which, while it leaves *him* as he stood, would involve the rest of the country in hopeless dependance and indelible disgrace. "If *ever the day comes*

† For this and the other passages marked with (" ") inverted commas vide Mr. Pitt's speech in the British House of Commons on the 31st of January, as published in the Morning Post,

that the Catholics shall give proof of their principles!" It is evident then that the probation of a century has not proved to Mr. Pitt that the Catholics may be admitted to every privilege—When then will he be satisfied?—At the end of another century, should he, or *such a minister, then exist?* It is doubtful whether he who has thought a trial of one century insufficient, would be convinced at the end of another; but it is *not* doubtful that an advantage so remote, even if it were certain, can but little influence the actions of the present generation; and the Catholics, I conceive, will not be much inclined to confide in the future policy of that man who declares that at present he does not think it *safe* to trust them. I conclude then, that from Mr. Pitt, should he succeed in his plan of subjugating the country, the Catholic has nothing to hope. What does he see on the other side? At present he is excluded, certainly, from some of the privileges of the constitution; but it cannot escape his attention that he is in progression toward a *full* enjoyment of all its benefits. It is yet little more than twenty years since he began his career from a point which, happily, is very remote indeed from that at which he now stands: His progress, for some years, was slow; but as he advanced, his velocity increased, and has continued to increase with rapid acceleration till the present hour, when the goal appears not only within view, but almost within his reach. Do I promise him that he shall reach it? No; it is not mine to promise—that is an event which, like the effect of a physical cause, depends not on the will of the individual, but on the immutable laws which govern the moral world—for it is not to the spirit of Catholic claims—to the management of the Catholic body—nor to the liberality and concessions of the Protestant that I attribute his elevation to the rank of freeman which he now holds. I consider it as the natural and necessary effect of a wife, temperate and loyal conduct on his part, and the expanding energy of our free constitution on the other. While *he*, then, continues to act with wisdom, temperance and loyalty; and while *we* continue to possess a free constitution, those causes will continue to produce the same effects, and must, eventually, raise him to that highest point in the scale of freedom for which his virtue shall have fitted him. But let him start aside from the honourable course he has hitherto pursued; let him for the base bribe which an insidious minister *holds up to his view*, but *does not promise him*—let him for this become a deadly instrument in the hands of that minister to stab the constitution of his native land;—he will find himself shorn of his strength, and instead of being raised to the dignity which he courted, will be sunk to that lowest state of human degradation—that of a disappointed traitor; laughed at by the knave who duped him, and execrated by all mankind! He will learn, when too late, that personal freedom cannot be obtained by selling the liberties of his country!

In offering to my countrymen these few thoughts on

the speech of the British Minister, I have not touched on the question now so common—"Is the Union given up? Will the Minister press the measure?" If the question were asked of me, I would say to the people of Ireland—"It depends on *you* whether the Minister will, or will not, press an Union;" so far as extrinsic circumstances can affect you, your subjugation is already complete; the contract for your delivery is already signed, sealed and delivered to the British parliament; it remains only that the Guinea Merchant who has made it, should get possession of you in order to fulfill his bargain." This is not a fanciful allusion; and it is worth observing, perhaps, that the reasons which are offered to induce you to an Union are exactly those by which the trader in human flesh extenuates the barbarous traffic—"He rescues the hapless African from the turbulence, the blood, the barbarity, the ignorance, which made his freedom a curse—and he confers on him all the blessings of tranquil, civilized, industrious *SLAVERY!*" He restrains his turbulence, but it is by fetters! He teaches him morality, but it is with stripes! He inculcates christianity, but it is by the driver's whip! The British Minister too, offers to tranquillize, to instruct, to civilize Ireland; but the price of tuition must be her liberty! Let us take care that if we give up freedom for British morals, and independence for her civilization, Irishmen will not be taught by the same process!

But if the Minister be resolved to carry an Union, can we prevent him? I say, *yes*: Yet I allow the task may be difficult. The situation in which we stand, is, no doubt, most arduous—it calls for incessant vigilance, and indefatigable activity. But I have no doubt that if we set about the work, we are fully equal to it. The people of Ireland know not their own force, if they doubt it. In the moral, as well as the natural world, there exist powers of indefinite force, in subjects apparently feeble—and which want but to be concentrated, to be irresistible—A drop of water, reduced to steam, and properly confined and directed, may burst a rock. *One* principle fairly urged, may overset a Minister, tho' fortified by all the patronage of an empire, and disencumbered of all the clogs of honesty and honour. But what is that principle which must be inculcated to save Ireland? It is this, "That national liberty and independence are the only true sources of sound morals, of civilization, of wealth, of strength, and of commerce—that liberty and independence, are the constitution of Ireland; and that the people of Ireland, (I mean its property, not its population) are its guardians." I shall not now enter into a detail of those measures, which, as guardians of their constitution, I think they ought to take at this momentous crisis—happily, the integrity, the spirit of its representatives, have made it the less necessary. I shall, therefore, only suggest to them that they acquired that constitution by boldly speaking out, and that by the same explicit declaration of their sense, by the manly, bold avowal that they are determined

to maintain the independence they have asserted, they *will* preserve it! Such a declaration, the British Minister, rash and presumptuous as he is, will not dare to controvert. Should, however, that measure fail, the means of Ireland are not yet exhausted—other modes will occur, by which a legal resistance may be made to a project that endangers the connection of the empire. But should even these remedies fail also, I am told there remains yet *ANOTHER*—one deeply hidden in the bosom of the constitution; and which is to be revealed but with its expiring breath! It is not for *ME* to disclose it!

AN IRISHMAN.

S O N G.

Tune—"Moggy Lawder."

IERNE once the Premier fought,
With Johnny Bull to wed, fir,
And to his Royal Master brought,
Proposals on that head, fir.
And begg'd his Majesty would take
Into consideration,
If by their Union he could make
One great, imperial nation.

The council summon'd by the king,
Debated on the scheme, fir,
And soon they all approv'd the thing,
Well knowing whence it came, fir.

Young Billy much rejoic'd to see
His plan met approbation,
And whisper'd to old Hawkesbury,
"Good funds for new taxation."

To work, then slyly Billy went,
Well skill'd in prostitution,
To bribe the Irish Parliament,
To sell their Constitution.
The basest means of ev'ry kind,
Were used by this projector,
But one apostate could he find,
A hearth-money collector.

Let's stigmatize with mark'd contempt,
And scorn the fordid knave, fir,
Whom private int'rest thus could tempt,
His country to enslave, fir.
Our liberties we will maintain,
Nor tamely them surrender,
But each shall firmly still remain,
His country's bold defender.

'Gainst Traitors and Despotism,
Our kingdom we'll defend, fir,
And henceforth all domestic schism,
For ever let us end, fir.
In one great cause let all unite,
To guard the Irish nation,
In independence, her birth-right,
'Gainst British usurpation.

In bumpers all distinctions drown,
And in their place let's toast then,
Ierne's Parliament and Crown,
And may she ever boast them.
Great Britain still we'll freely serve,
And still support connection,
But independence we'll preserve,
For an Union is subjection.